



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-0906

April 27, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
H-204, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-230, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-220, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer:

The Republican Study Committee's (RSC) National Security & Foreign Affairs Task Force writes to express our belief that China must be held accountable for any harmful actions it may have taken related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Task Force is deeply concerned over reports that since the earliest accounts in December 2019 of the virus that originated in Wuhan, China, the Chinese government may have concealed critical information from the world about COVID-19. Vice President Mike Pence has even stated that China was aware of the dangers related to the virus as early as November. It has also been reported that when Dr. Li Wenliang tried to warn the Chinese public, about COVID-19, he was arrested by the Chinese authorities and eventually died in prison. Because China refused to allow journalists and scientists into Wuhan soon after the virus emerged, our nation and others were hindered in our initial responses. Incredibly, Chinese officials then spread disinformation to blame the United States for the virus, even claiming that COVID-19 was created by the U.S. military. For all these reasons, there are legitimate concerns regarding the accuracy of all data emanating from China.<sup>1</sup>

The present pandemic should also cause policymakers to investigate a number of aspects of U.S.-China relations, including possible undue Chinese influence within international institutions such as the World Health Organization (WHO), which have defended China's response to the pandemic. As the number of cases and the death toll soared, the WHO took months to declare the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic.

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<sup>1</sup> Culver, David, As China Goes Back to Work, Many Wonder If the Country's Coronavirus Recovery Can Be Trusted, CNN (Apr. 3, 2020) <https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/02/asia/china-coronavirus-numbers-trust-intl-hnk/index.html>.



It is essential that Congress takes the following measures to hold China accountable for any harmful actions it may have taken with respect to the current pandemic:

- Authorize sanctions against any foreign official who is found to have been involved in a COVID-19 cover-up, as would be authorized by the Li Wenliang Global Public Health Accountability Act, sponsored by Rep. John Curtis and Sen. Tom Cotton.<sup>2</sup>

- End all visas for Chinese government officials and their children to come to the U.S. whether for education, leisure, or other purposes, until China retracts its statements blaming the U.S. for the virus.

- Counter Chinese propaganda and disinformation efforts by enacting H.R. 1811, the Chinese Government and Communist Party's Political Influence Operations Act, sponsored by Rep. Chris Smith and Sen. Marco Rubio. This bill directs the Department of State to devise a long-term strategy to counter the Chinese government's political influence operations and requires a report on Chinese influence operations in the U.S.

- Prohibit the distribution of China Daily, a publication owned by the Chinese Communist Party, to congressional offices and require the Department of Justice to investigate China Daily's compliance with the Foreign Agents Registration Act. China Daily plays an important role in China's ongoing disinformation efforts and yet is delivered to congressional offices alongside American newspapers.<sup>3</sup>

- Limit the Foreign Agent Registration Act (FARA) exception for academic activities to apply only if the activities do not promote the political agenda of a foreign country. This would ensure that Confucius Institutes, which are Chinese government-controlled language institutes on U.S. college campuses, are not used to promote Chinese political narratives. Also, reduce the threshold required for universities to disclose foreign contributions from \$250,000 to \$50,000. Both proposals are included in the Foreign Influence Transparency Act, introduced by Task Force Chair Rep. Joe Wilson (SC-02).

- Press the Chinese government to permit access to China for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to better respond to COVID-19 pandemic.

- Require the State Department to investigate the disappearance of three Chinese citizen journalists who sought to expose the impact of the coronavirus on the Chinese city of Wuhan and enact sanctions on those found responsible for the disappearances under the Global Magnitsky Act, as requested in a letter authored by Rep. Jim Banks (IN-04).<sup>4</sup>

- Undertake a congressional probe of the WHO, its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and its relationship with China. Build off President Trump's funding freeze by basing future federal funding decisions on the results

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<sup>2</sup> Press Release, Curtis Teams Up with Senators Cotton, Hawley, on Li Wenliang Global Public Health Accountability Act, Congressman Curtis (Apr. 2, 2020) <https://curtis.house.gov/press-releases/curtis-teams-up-with-senators-cotton-hawley-on-li-wenliang-global-public-health-accountability-act/>.

<sup>3</sup> Katherine Tully-McManus, Why Is a Chinese Propaganda Newspaper Delivered to Congress? Rep. Jim Banks Wants to Know, ROLL CALL (September 30, 2019) <https://www.rollcall.com/2019/09/30/why-is-a-chinese-propaganda-newspaper-delivered-to-congress-rep-jim-banks-wants-to-know/>.

<sup>4</sup> Press Release, Banks Calls For Investigation Into Three Missing Chinese Journalists, U.S. Congressman Jim Banks, April 1, 2020. <https://banks.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=1651>.



of congressional and administration investigations along with adoption of reforms to instill independence, transparency, and accountability at the WHO.

- Ensure Taiwan’s membership in the WHO by passing H.R. 237, sponsored by Rep. Ted Yoho (FL-03), to direct the Secretary of State to deliver a strategy to Congress regarding how the U.S. will work to regain observer status in the WHO.
- Enact H.R. 2744, the USAID Branding Modernization Act, sponsored by Rep. Michael McCaul (TX-10), to authorize USAID to use American branding and insignia when providing foreign assistance. China has taken advantage of the crisis to distribute foreign assistance throughout the world using its own branding which makes it even more imperative that U.S. assistance is branded.

Failing to investigate and hold the Chinese Communist Party accountable for actions found to have hidden or exacerbated the COVID-19 pandemic would be a mistake. China is already using the crisis as an opportunity to act as “both the arsonist and the firefighter<sup>5</sup>,” by exacerbating the crisis and attempting to play rescuer through the provision of medical goods. We urge that Congress undertake these important items quickly in the wake of the current pandemic.

Sincerely,



Rep. Mike Johnson (LA-04)  
Chairman, Republican Study Committee



Rep. Joe Wilson (SC-02)  
Chairman, RSC National Security & Foreign Affairs Task Force

CC:

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
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Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Mike Pence  
Vice President of the United States  
Chair, White House Coronavirus Task Force  
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The Honorable Steven Mnuchin  
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The Honorable Russel T. Vought  
Acting Director  
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The Honorable Mark Meadows  
Chief of Staff to the President  
The White House  
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Washington, DC 20500

<sup>5</sup> Sobolik, Michael, Don’t Let the Chinese Communist Party Use the Coronavirus to Its Advantage, NATIONAL REVIEW, (Mar. 29, 2020). <https://www.nationalreview.com/2020/03/coronavirus-pandemic-chinese-communist-party-trying-escape-blame-take-advantage-recovery/>.

